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## BOOK REVIEWS

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*Commercial Geography.* By HENRY GANNETT, CARL L. GARRISON, AND EDWIN J. HOUSTON. New York: American Book Co., 1905. Pp. vi+416+30.

The latest textbook in commercial geography comes to us from the hands of three well-known scholars, each strong in his field. Mr. Gannett, the official geographer of the United States government, has had many years of experience and most excellent training in actual mapping and in the geographic presentation of statistical material in the various government publications. To this he has added contributions of a high order of merit in various cyclopedias and other works. The other collaborators have had ample experience in other lines, the one as a teacher and supervisor of teaching, and the other as teacher and worker in a special field.

The plan of presentation followed does not differ materially from the half-dozen recent American texts in commercial geography. Part I treats of commercial conditions; Part II, of commercial products; and Part III, of commercial countries. This arrangement is logical and defensible. It is borrowed bodily from Chisholm, though American authors do not generally acknowledge it. Mr. Chisholm was free to use an octavo page, and to expand his presentation to over 600 pages, thus making it possible to give an adequate discussion of some topics and of some countries. When the first serious attempt was made to provide a textbook in commercial geography in America, the author took Chisholm as his model. He succeeded in mentioning nearly every condition and commodity that Chisholm had given. And he performed the wizard feat of condensing it into a well-leaded and margined duodecimo page, and cutting the number of pages down to 500. In spite of the condensation, the book was well written and carefully edited, and, answering a pressing want, it met with instant success. The possession of a text made it much easier to establish courses in the subject, and interest has grown rapidly. Then came the insidious ambition and influence of the rival publishing house and selling agent. Here is a successful book which must be met upon its own ground. The prescription which has won success must be followed without reservation. Every principle, and commodity, and place, and map, and illustration mentioned in the successful book must be duplicated, and the size and price of the book must be kept in the same class with the successful attempt. Thus the new author is left almost no option in style or matter, or method of treatment. This is a serious handicap. It has been imposed over and over again in the history of schoolbook-making in America. Our common-school geography has suffered from it from the year one. Here concentration has been carried to such an extreme that almost every bit of juice has been squeezed out of the matter presented, leaving dry facts, lists of things, and tables of statistics, almost as void of interest in some cases as a spelling-book, or at best a pocket dictionary. Such stuff is hard to read, and harder to remember, and, if memorized, is as likely to produce mental indigestion as healthy growth. This salesman's ideal in book-making is a form of repressive conservatism, stunting and damaging in its influence upon the subject presented.

As I scan this latest text in commercial geography, it is again the salesman's finger I see writing on the wall. It is Chisholm in the American condensed form over again. The prescription is accurately filled. The subjects are all there, and the countries

too, and something is predicated of every one; though it reduces cement, for example, to six lines, with never a hint of its great significance in our industrial life.

One of the faults of this generous inclusiveness is the difficulty in the logical distribution of emphasis. For example, ginger and mustard occupy as much space as silver, and zinc two and a half times as much.

Some errors have crept in. It is not true that southern slopes are chosen for orchards in the United States and Canada, as stated on p. 9. It is tautology to say "Desert of Sahara," p. 20. Metamorphic rocks are not restricted to those of aqueous origin, as implied on p. 21. The last paragraph on p. 29 should be reconstructed so as to show that it is a *species*, not *an animal*, that changes in the new realm. Why say "metallic" ores (p. 46)? On p. 104 it would appear that ramie and China grass are different plants. It would be interesting to know what kind of "rails" are made from paper pulp (p. 119). The most of our quinine comes from Ceylon and India, regions that are not in the category of "to some extent also" (p. 123). *Are* all the cattle slaughtered for food in this country inspected by the government (see p. 126)? On p. 142 it reads as though "a sponge" were "an animal." The same page tells us that the cochineal lives on trees. On p. 221 we read: "It will be noticed how inevitably the large cities become railroad centers"—a duplicate, so far as new lands are concerned, of the little girl's observation that the large rivers always flow past the big cities. On p. 223 we learn that it is because corn is "bulky" it is mainly fed to live stock.

But this is criticism enough. There many more errors, due to oversight doubtless, inevitable in a first edition, many of which are plainly due to haste or carelessness in proofreading.

The graphs of percentage of production ought to be challenged. Absolute quantities have been purposely omitted. We see at glance that the United States produces about 25 per cent. of the world's lead, about 37 per cent. of the steel, and about 75 per cent. of the corn. But there is never a hint of how these commodities compare with each other. Such a comparison is quite as instructive as the rank of states. It is true, values could be derived from a table in the appendix, but we know that as a rule it will not be done. Statistics, too, ought to be dated. There is scarcely a date in the book.

The maps are, as a rule, well drawn, and are provided in generous measure. A very excellent index is provided. The typography and mechanical execution of the book are admirable.

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*School History of the United States.* By HENRY WILLIAM ELSON. New York:

The Macmillan Co., 1906. Pp. xxviii + 467.

*The Making of the American Nation.* By JACQUES WARDLAW REDWAY, F.R.G.S.

New York: Silver, Burdett & Co., 1905. Pp. x + 420 + 56.

There seems to be no limit to the production of textbooks on American history for use in grammar schools, in spite of the fact that no more books of this type are needed at present. Enterprising publishers, however, will doubtless continue to encourage the mania for changing textbooks every year or two, so that we must expect still further additions, which will do little more than to give a slightly different version of the old, old story.